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ABSTRACT

When children play with a broad variety of toys, the experiences help them to develop to their fullest potential. This booklet is designed to help parents provide the best play opportunities for children. It describes how the toy industry and government work together to ensure toy safety and offers simple charts to guide parents in toy shopping. It emphasizes that play is essential to children's development and is the way that youngsters learn the skills they will need for a happy and capable adulthood, including physical skills, language acquisition, social skills, problem solving, and emotional well being. The booklet also emphasizes the importance of parent participation and recommends that parents observe the child's skills, join in and play at the child's level, be creative, and have a good time with each other. In regard to toy safety, this booklet emphasizes parental supervision, the importance of a hazard-free environment, and proper selection and maintenance of toys. A safety checklist for parents to select suitable toys for their children, information on age and safety labeling, and toy selection guidelines according to age group are included. (MOK)

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The Toy Manufacturers of America Guide to

Toys & Play

PS 023685

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One of the most important thing

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important things a child can do is play. Play is the essential joy of childhood and is also the way children learn about themselves, their environment and the people around them. As they play, children learn to solve problems, get along with other people and control their bodies as they enrich their creativity and develop leadership skills. When children play with a broad variety of toys, the experiences help them to develop to their fullest potential.

Children bring boundless energy and imagination to their play with toys and are constantly developing new and creative ways to play. Because there are so many different kinds of toys and novel ways to play with them, children learn that the world is a diverse place with unlimited possibilities. Toys thus have an exciting role in helping children to become mature, confident and imaginative adults.

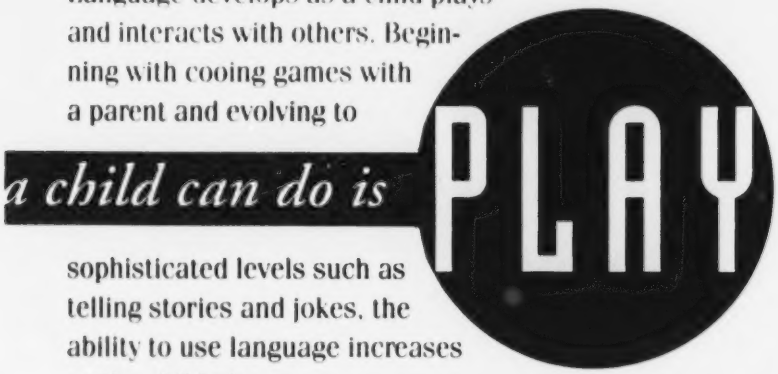
This booklet has been designed to help you provide the best play opportunities for your child, describes how the toy industry and government work together to ensure toy safety and offers simple charts to guide you as you do your toy shopping. Have fun!

LEARNING THROUGH PLAY

Play is essential to a child's development and is the way that youngsters learn the skills they will need for a happy and capable adulthood. According to child development specialist Mary Sinker, these are just some of the ways a child learns while playing:

Physical skills are developed through movement as a child learns to reach, grasp, crawl, run, climb and balance. Dexterity develops as he or she handles objects in play.

Language develops as a child plays and interacts with others. Beginning with cooing games with a parent and evolving to sophisticated levels such as telling stories and jokes, the ability to use language increases as the child plays.



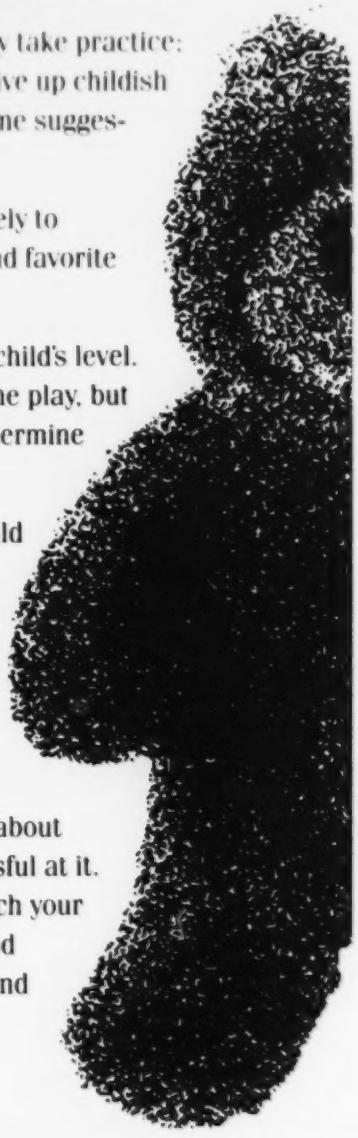
Social skills grow as the child plays. Learning to cooperate, negotiate, take turns and play by the rules are all important skills learned in early games. It is through imaginative play that the child begins to learn some of the roles and rules of society.

Understanding how the world works develops as a result of problem solving with toys. What fits here? How big is that? Is this color the same as that color? How can I balance these? A child moves on to higher levels of thought as he or she plays in a stimulating environment.

Emotional well being develops through positive play experiences. When children feel successful and capable as they play, they acquire important ingredients for emotional health. Sharing play experiences also forges strong bonds between parent and child throughout childhood.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN PLAY

Parents are their child's first and best playmates. Not only do parents have an important role in choosing good toys, but research shows that the most creative children are those who have had adults involved in their play. The richest play occurs when the adult takes an active role and plays alongside the child, rather than just providing the toys or supervising the activity.



Becoming part of a child's play may take practice; after all, we have been taught to give up childish things and "grow up." Here are some suggestions for joining your child's play:

✪ ***Observe:*** Watch your child closely to determine his or her skill levels and favorite activities.

✪ ***Follow:*** Join in and play at the child's level. You can add to the complexity of the play, but let your child be in control and determine the direction of the play.

✪ ***Be creative:*** Rediscover the child inside yourself and let go of the adult notion that there is only one way to play with a toy. Use toys as "springboards" and you'll be amazed at how many different ways you can play.

✪ ***Have fun:*** The wonderful thing about playing is that everyone is successful at it. Don't use playtime to test or stretch your child's skills. It's a time to feel good about yourself and each other—and to just have fun together.

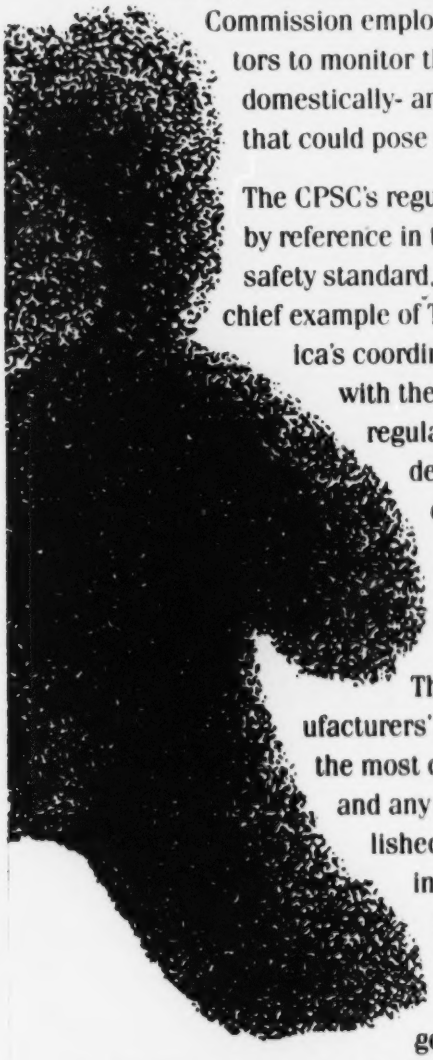
SAFETY

How the Federal Government and Industry Cooperate to Regulate Toy Safety

Toys have the distinction of being one of the most closely monitored and regulated products on the market. This is understandable, given that over 2.6 billion toys are purchased each year and parents are natu-

rally very concerned about the products they give their children.

The toy industry and the Federal government work closely together to ensure that toys are among the safest products brought into the home. The United States Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), created in 1973 and headquartered in Bethesda, Maryland, has the authority to develop and enforce safety regulations for toys and other children's products. The Commission employs teams of field inspectors to monitor the marketplace for both domestically- and foreign-produced toys that could pose safety hazards.



The CPSC's regulations are incorporated by reference in the industry's voluntary safety standard, ASTM F963, and are a chief example of Toy Manufacturers of America's coordination and cooperation with the CPSC. TMA also works regularly with the Commission to develop safety testing procedures and to monitor any potential hazards associated with toys already in the market.

The American voluntary manufacturers' standards are known as the most comprehensive in the world and any safety requirements established by the CPSC are included in ASTM F963. (Many companies will note their compliance with the standard on toy packaging.) A toy may go through over one hundred safety tests designed to duplicate the kind of use and abuse it may get in the hands of a child.

One of the most important safety tests a manufacturer conducts is for small parts. Since children under the age of three are very likely to put objects in their mouths, it is especially critical that toys intended for infants and toddlers be manufactured with oversized pieces which meet U.S. safety specifications.

A recent CPSC study of hospital emergency room data suggests that the most frequent causes of injury involving toys are falling on, tripping over or being hit with toys. (In fact, toy-related and toy-caused accidents, which sound so similar, are actually very different. "Toy-related" accidents happen for any number of reasons but are not due to product flaws—e.g., tripping in the dark over a toy that was not put away after play. "Toy-caused" accidents, which occur due to a fault in the toy's design, material content, construction or performance, are infrequent.)

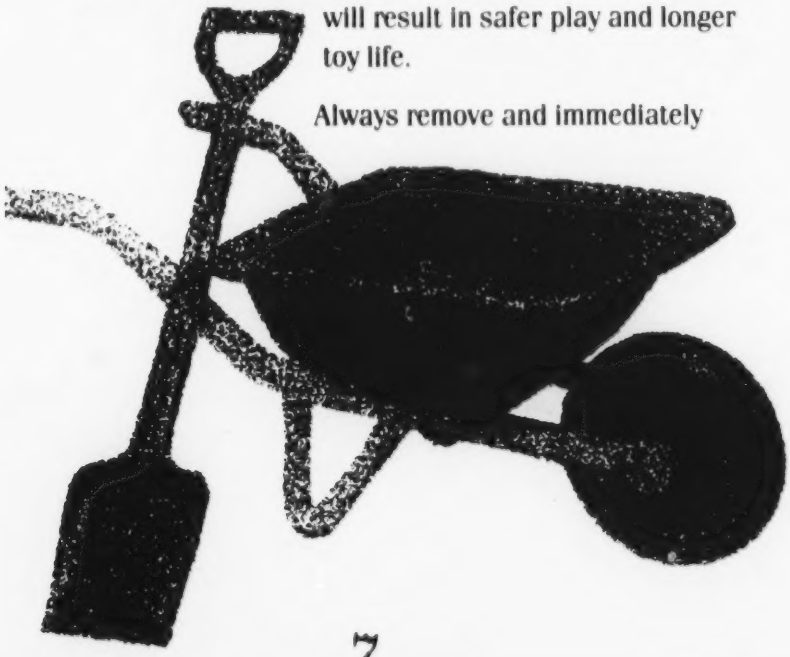
The work that the toy industry does to design and produce safe toys, as well as to communicate the importance of proper adult supervision, continues to pay off by making toys one of the safest consumer products available.

Supervision is Essential

Careful manufacturing methods and toy selection are not enough, however. Toys must be used, maintained and stored correctly to ensure that the safety built in at the factory continues in the home. There is no substitute, ever, for sensible adult supervision!

Parents and others responsible for a child's care must be safety experts. Remember, too, that youngsters learn safe play habits and responsibility from grownups. Read instructions carefully to make sure that both you and the child understand them. Special attention to directions will result in safer play and longer toy life.

Always remove and immediately



discard all packaging from a toy before giving it to a baby or small child.

A Few Words About Baby Safety

An infant's environment should be made as hazard-free as possible. Crib gyms and mobiles must be removed once the infant reaches five months of age or begins to push up on hands and knees. Remember that crib toys such as stuffed animals, rattles and beads should never be hung or attached to a crib, playpen or carriage with any sort of string or ribbon. (No matter how harmless you may think this is, there is the possibility of the cord getting attached to a button or strap of clothing or wrapped around hands, feet or neck.)

For additional ideas on the selection and care of baby's crib, stroller, car seat and other non-toy essentials, write to the Juvenile Products Manufacturers Association for their free brochure, "Safe and Sound for Baby." Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope (U.S. postage only) to JPMA, Two Greentree Centre, Suite 225, P.O. Box 955, Marlton, NJ 08053.

Toy Maintenance

The proper selection of toys and supervision of play are not the only steps that parents can take to ensure safe and fun playtime. Since toys are among the first things a child considers his or her own, adults should encourage a youngster to assume responsibility by demonstrating how to use and care for toys.

Spot check toys regularly for minor damage and urge children to let you know when toys need repair. A child does not always see significance in a small crack or tear if the toy is still in one piece. Often a spot of glue, a tightened bolt, a few drops of oil or a bit of tape will prevent further damage and a possible accident.

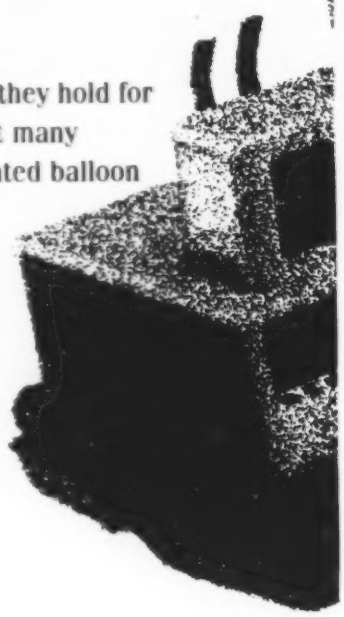
Do not allow toys to remain outdoors overnight. Rain, snow and dew cause rust and damage that increase the risk of accidents. A toy damaged beyond repair should be discarded or replaced promptly.

Teach children to store their toys properly in a place selected by you. Explain that putting toys where they

belong after play may not only prevent them from being lost, stolen or damaged, but may also prevent younger brothers and sisters from injuring themselves on toys intended for older children. Your encouragement will help to foster a sense of responsibility and teach that care must be given to valued belongings.

A Note About Balloons

Because of the special attraction they hold for children, balloons pose a risk that many parents overlook. Since an uninflated balloon or a piece of a broken balloon could present a choking or suffocation hazard, adults should inflate balloons and supervise their use with children under the age of eight.



SAFETY CHECKLIST

Remember that safety is the most important consideration when selecting toys! Keep this checklist of safety suggestions handy when shopping and share it with your child's caregivers.

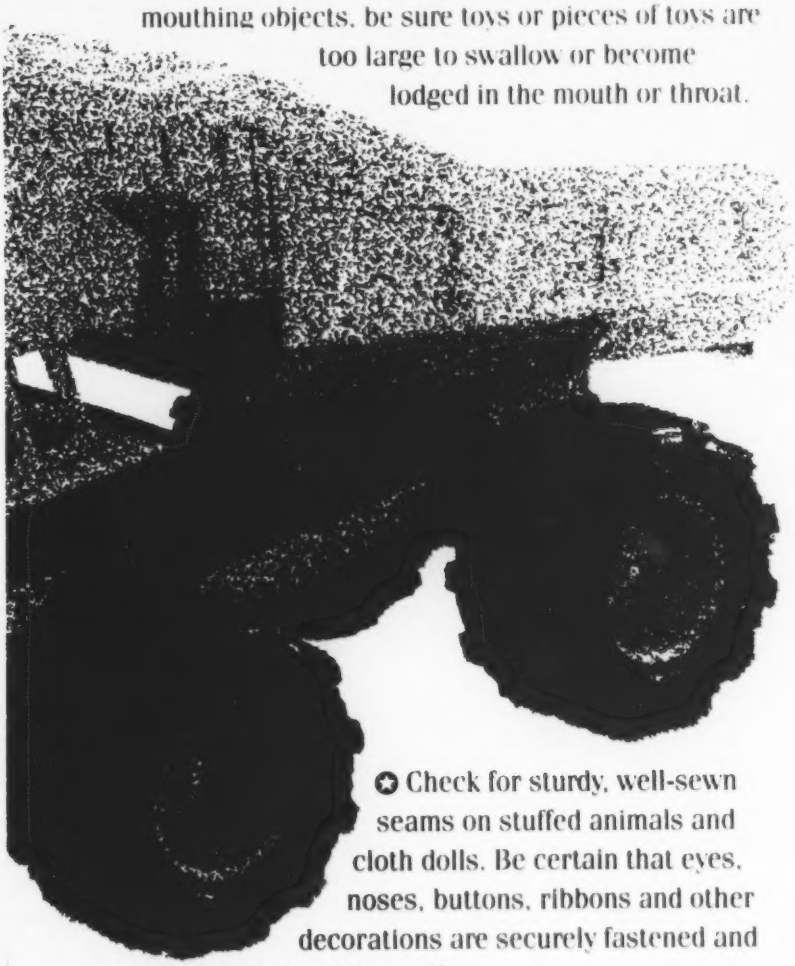
✪ Use recommended age labeling as a guide and look for warnings and other safety messages on toy packaging. This will be covered in more detail in the next section.

✪ Consider your home environment and the ages of other, particularly younger, children in the family. A toy intended for an older child may be unsuitable and possibly dangerous in the hands of a younger child.

✪ Be especially careful when selecting toys for children under the age of three. Avoid toys with small parts that could be swallowed or inhaled, including small balls and uninflated balloons, and those with sharp points or rough edges.

✪ Make sure that soft rattles, squeakers and teething toys, even in their most compressed state, are too large to fit completely in an infant's mouth.

✪ No matter how old a child is, if he or she is still mouthing objects, be sure toys or pieces of toys are too large to swallow or become lodged in the mouth or throat.



✪ Check for sturdy, well-sewn seams on stuffed animals and cloth dolls. Be certain that eyes, noses, buttons, ribbons and other decorations are securely fastened and cannot be pulled or bitten off.

✪ Choose electric toys with heating elements only for children over the age of eight and instruct them to play with those toys only when there is adult supervision.

✪ Be certain that arrows and darts used by children have blunt tips such as rubber or flexible plastic suction cups, cork or other protective points. Check to see that tips are attached securely to shafts.

✪ Look for the words "machine/surface washable" on stuffed and cloth toys and "UL (Underwriters Laboratories) Approved" on electrical toys.

✪ Purchase a toy storage chest that has a removable lid or a spring-loaded support, allowing the lid to remain securely open. Check for smooth, finished edges, proper air holes and hinge line clearances to prevent pinched fingers.

ABOUT TOY LABELS

Why Toys Are Labeled

Labels on toy packages make choosing safe, appropriate toys much easier. However, no package label can tell you exactly which toys are right for your child and not all toys are appropriate for every youngster. On the other hand, child development experts agree that children develop in a sequence of stages and toymakers use this information to indicate which types of toys are safe and appropriate for children of various ages. Product labels help consumers distinguish among the vast number of toys on the market to make the most appropriate purchases.

Remember, each child is unique and develops at his or her own pace. The best thing adults can do when purchasing toys is to know the maturity, skill level and interests of the child, read the age labels carefully and use them as guides and, above all, use common sense. Nobody knows your child better than you do.

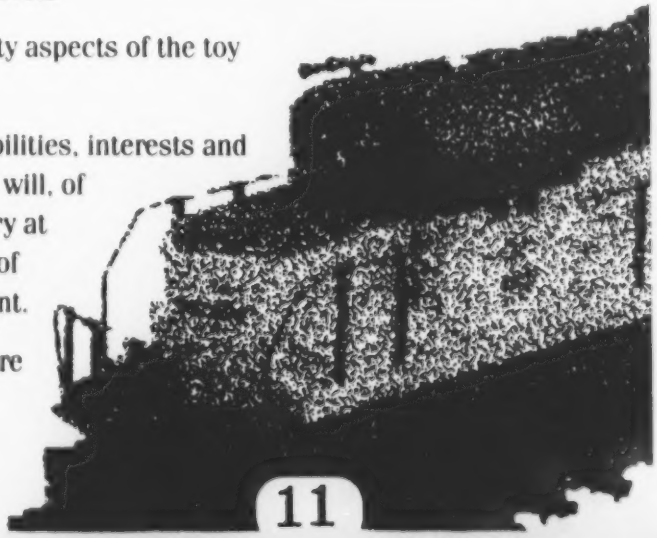
How Toys Are Age Labeled

Toymakers follow the age grading guidelines of the Consumer Product Safety Commission, which consist of four main criteria:

- the ability of a child to physically manipulate and play with the features of a toy
- the ability of a child to understand how to use a toy
- the child's play needs and interests at different developmental levels
- the safety aspects of the toy itself

A child's abilities, interests and play needs will, of course, vary at each level of development.

New toys are frequently

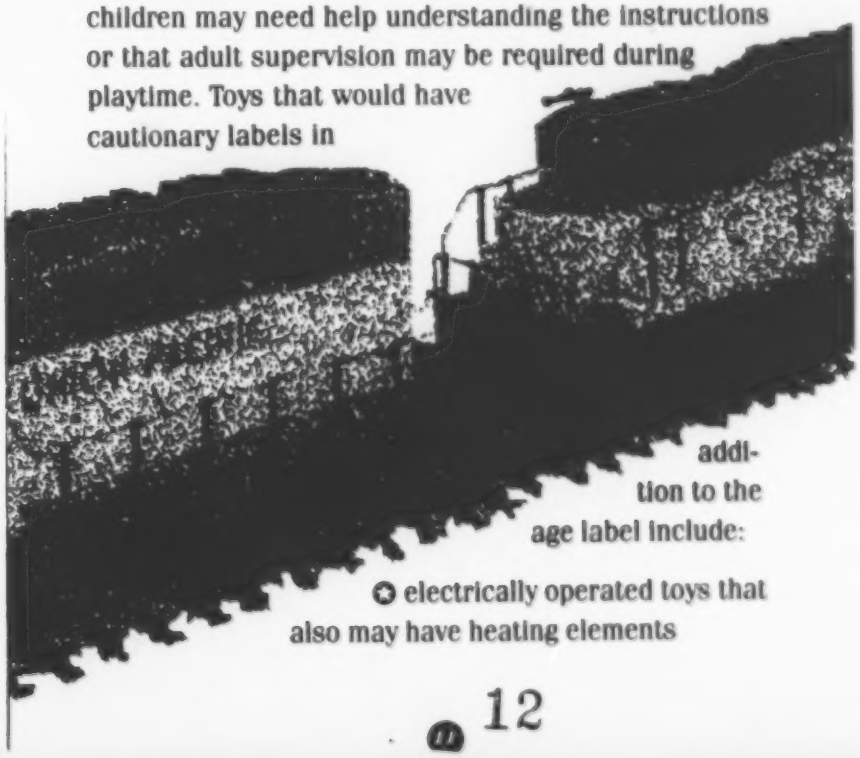


tested by children in play settings to determine durability, age-appropriateness and play patterns. At least one large toy manufacturer maintains an in-house, year-round nursery school for this purpose, while others establish relationships with universities and other educational facilities. Manufacturers also may involve parents, teachers and others who care for children for their first-hand knowledge and valuable insights. In addition, a toymaker may have a child development specialist, psychologist or physician on staff or working as a consultant.

Safety Labeling

As of January 1, 1995, new toys and games for children ages three through six will be required to carry warnings about choking hazards. The warnings will tell the consumer if the toy contains small parts, a small ball, marbles, or balloons; that these items are choking hazards, and that the toy is not intended for children under three. No matter what the age of the child, toys with these labels should be avoided if the child is still mouthing objects.

Some manufacturers may add other safety warnings and cautions to the package and/or instructions advising parents that special care should be taken. Sometimes manufacturers wish to emphasize that children may need help understanding the instructions or that adult supervision may be required during playtime. Toys that would have cautionary labels in addition to the age label include:

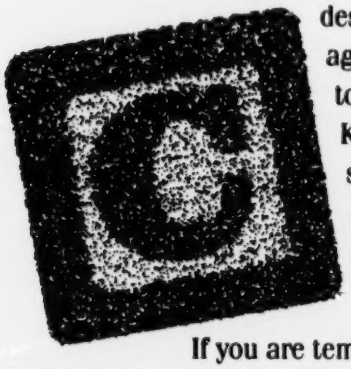


- electrically operated toys that also may have heating elements

- science toy sets that may contain toxic chemicals
- craft or science kits that may have functional sharp instruments such as scissors or breakable glass
- swim aids that are not life-saving devices
- balloons
- kites
- crib gyms and mobiles, which should be removed when the baby begins to push up on hands and knees to prevent possible entanglement
- any toy intended for assembly by an adult which may have potentially hazardous sharp points and edges in its pre-assembled state

How to Get the Most From Labels

Now that you are familiar with the research involved in designing a toy and assigning it an age label, you can make your next toy purchase with confidence. Keeping in mind your child's skills and interests and using age labels as a guide, you will be able to select a fun and appropriate toy.



If you are tempted to buy your child a toy labeled for an older child, please reconsider. Remember that the age label has been thoughtfully assigned based upon many factors, including safety. If you give a child a toy that is too simple or too advanced, he or she may be frustrated and/or exposed to a safety hazard.

Remember: the purpose of toys is to have fun.

TOY SELECTION

The following are some suggestions for suitable toys for children of various ages. They are offered as a guide to help in your selection, but remember that all children are different. Study your child and get to know his or her interests, abilities and limitations. Not all children enjoy the same kinds of play: one child will be

interested in building with blocks or doing puzzles; another may prefer riding bikes or playing ball; your child may enjoy pretending with a dollhouse or playing board games. Try to match the toy to your child and keep in mind that his or her interest in a toy will often carry through more than one age group.

Babies: Birth to One Year

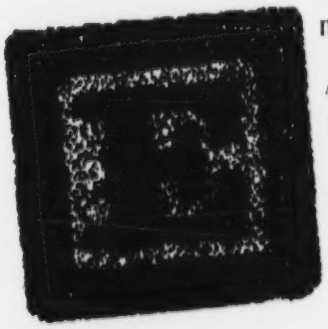
Experts agree that even babies need an assortment of toys. Since infants respond to smell, taste, sound, touch and sight, properly selected toys provide a small baby with opportunities to learn about size, shape, sound, texture and how things work.

Choose toys that:

- have pieces that are too large to swallow
- are lightweight for handling and grasping
- have no sharp edges or points
- are brightly colored
- are non-toxic

Brightly colored, lightweight toys of various textures stimulate a baby's senses. For young infants, toys to look at and listen to are best. Rattles, squeaky toys and crib gyms are ideal for grasping when the baby is ready to hold objects.

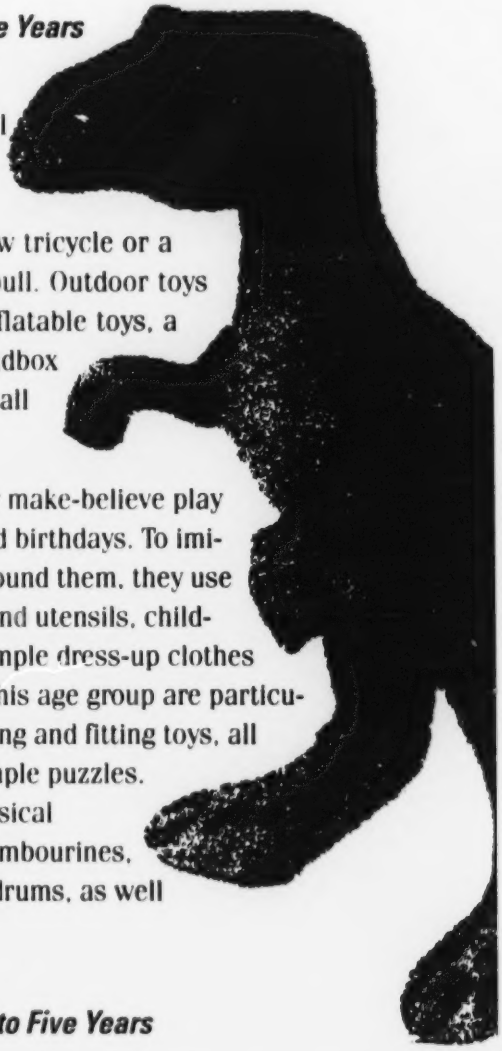
Soft dolls or stuffed animals made of non-toxic materials are fun to touch and hug but are not designed for sucking and chewing. Make sure the seams cannot be easily torn or bitten open and that eyes and noses are securely fastened.



A baby who is sitting up is ready for blocks with pictures or bright colors. Nesting cups or boxes and stacking rings are also favorites. Babies at this age enjoy their first

sturdy picture books showing familiar objects. Balls and push-pull toys are good choices when a baby can crawl and walk.

Toddlers: One to Three Years



A busy toddler needs toys for active physical play—especially things to ride and climb on, such as a low tricycle or a wagon to ride in and pull. Outdoor toys such as large balls, inflatable toys, a wading pool and a sandbox with digging tools are all good choices.

Toddlers begin to enjoy make-believe play just before their second birthdays. To imitate the adult world around them, they use play food, appliances and utensils, child-sized play furniture, simple dress-up clothes and dolls. Children in this age group are particularly interested in sorting and fitting toys, all kinds of blocks and simple puzzles. Toddlers also enjoy musical instruments such as tambourines, toy pianos, horns and drums, as well as listening to tapes.

Pre-Schoolers: Three to Five Years

Pre-schoolers are masters of make-believe. They like to act out grown-up roles and create imaginary situations. Costumes and equipment that help them in their pretend worlds are important at this stage. Some of the many possibilities include pretend money, play food, a toy cash register or telephone, a make-believe village, fort, circus, farm, gas station or restaurant, a puppet theater and play with dolls and doll furniture.

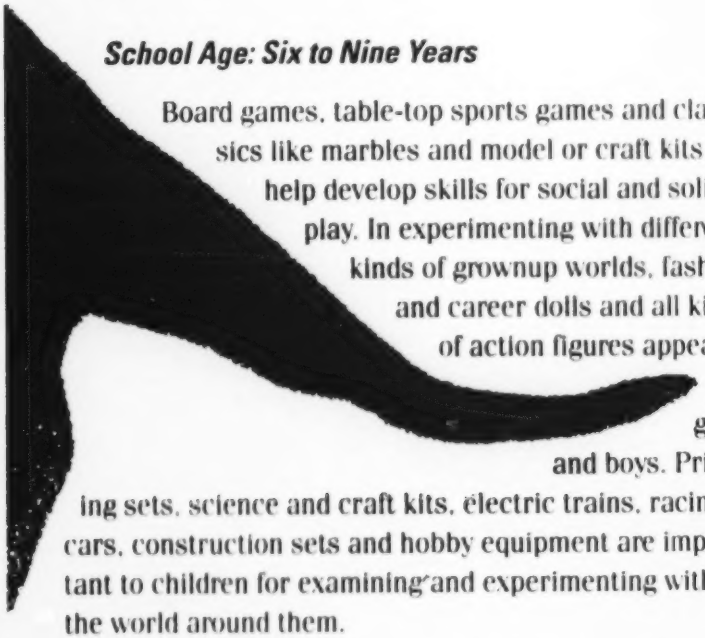
In a child's private world, a favorite toy is both a companion and protector. Dolls and teddy bears, for example, have helped countless children to cope with difficult moments. Children will sometimes express their feelings to toy "confidants" and share emotions with them that

they might otherwise keep to themselves.

Transportation is fascinating to young children. Trucks, cars, planes, trains, boats and tractors are all fun at this age and beyond. Larger outdoor toys, including gym equipment, wheeled vehicles and a first two-wheeled bicycle with helmet and training wheels, are appropriate now.

Visualization and memory skills can be sharpened by play that requires use of imagination or mental computation, with the introduction of board games, electronic toys and word and matching games geared specifically for this group. Construction sets, books and tapes, coloring sets, paints, crayons, puzzles, stuffed toys and dolls continue to be favorites.

School Age: Six to Nine Years



Board games, table-top sports games and classics like marbles and model or craft kits help develop skills for social and solitary play. In experimenting with different kinds of grownup worlds, fashion and career dolls and all kinds of action figures appeal to girls and boys. Printing sets, science and craft kits, electric trains, racing cars, construction sets and hobby equipment are important to children for examining and experimenting with the world around them.

For active physical play, a larger bicycle, ice and roller skates, a pogo stick, scooter, sled and other sports equipment, along with protective gear, are appropriate. Even though group play is enjoyed, children at this stage also play well by themselves. Paints, crayons and clay are still good selections, as are costumes, doll houses, play villages, miniature figures and vehicles, all of which help children to develop their imaginations and creativity.

Many games and electronic toys geared to children in this age group are labeled "educational" because they have been designed to help children learn specific skills and concepts, such as games which require forming words, matching letters of the alphabet with various objects or

learning about money through handling play coins and currency.

Video games appeal to children, teenagers and adults. Many games offer increasingly challenging levels of play, as well as opportunities to develop coordination skills and a sense of the meaning of strategies in relationships, usually through competition against an opponent.

There is no substitute, ever, for s

Nine to Twelve Years

Children begin to develop specific skills and life-long interests at this age. Give considerable attention to hobbies and crafts, model kits, magic sets, advanced construction sets, chemistry and science kits and puzzles. Peer acceptance is very important at this age. Active physical play now finds its expression with team play in a variety of sports. Social and intellectual skills are refined through board, card and electronic games, particularly those requiring strategy decisions.

Video and electronic games, table tennis and billiards (pool) are very popular at this stage. Dramatic play holds great appeal. Youngsters in this age group like to plan complete productions including props, costumes, printed programs, puppets and marionettes. Painting, sculpting, ceramics and other forms of artistic expression continue to be of interest, as do books, tapes and musical instruments.

Teenagers

After age twelve, children's interests in toys begin to merge with those of adults. This is apparent in the growing market for sophisticated electronic games and computer-based systems, which are often considered "family entertainment" rather than toys. They also will be interested in board and adventure games. Collectors of dolls, model cars, trains, miniatures and stuffed animals often begin their hobbies in the teenage years.

CONCLUSION

You've now completed the first step in mastering the basics of toy selection and play. Take the information and suggestions in this booklet and put them to good use.

Choose toys with care. Get involved and encourage

nsible adult SUPERVISION

your youngster to be creative through play. Children tend to remember lessons they learn while having fun, so set good examples for proper use and maintenance of toys. Remember, youngsters who are creative at play tend to be more creative, well adjusted and secure as adults.

Good luck!

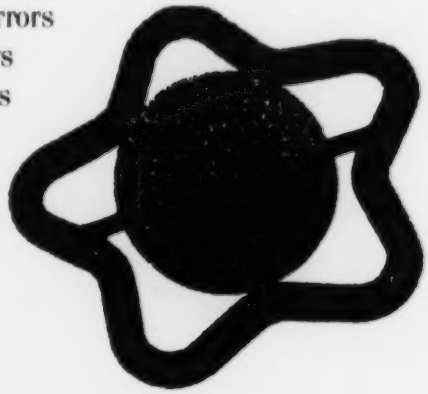
Birth to 1

Interests and Abilities

A baby learns about his or her environment by using all five senses—sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch. A child this age is also learning the concept of cause and effect and loves repetition.

Toy Suggestions

- mobiles and safety mirrors
- musical and chime toys
- rattles and squeak toys
- crib gyms and busy boxes
- nesting and stacking toys
- simple pop-up toys
- tub toys
- push-pull toys
- picture books



1 to 3

Interests and Abilities

A toddler moves busily within his or her environment—walking, climbing, pushing and riding. Imaginative play begins during this period, as does a strong interest in manipulating and problem solving with objects.

Toy Suggestions

- push-pull and ride-on toys
- small tricycle and wagon
- balls over 1.75" in diameter
- wading pool and sandbox—and toys to use in them
- play appliances, food and utensils
- dolls, stuffed animals and doll furniture

- simple puzzles, shape sorters, pegboards and rings on pegs
- blocks
- crayons, markers and modeling dough
- rhythm instruments
- tape player
- picture books

3 to 5

Interests and Abilities

A preschooler loves to be around other children and enjoys sharing many kinds of activities, particularly imaginative play and simple games.

Toy Suggestions

- dress-ups and accessories
- props for housekeeping, store and medical play
- puppets
- farm, village, house and other play sets
- small vehicles
- construction toys
- simple board games
- puzzles
- bead threading and lacing sets
- wheeled toys
- backyard gym sets
- art supplies: crayons, markers, modeling dough, paper
- tape player and tapes
- storybooks

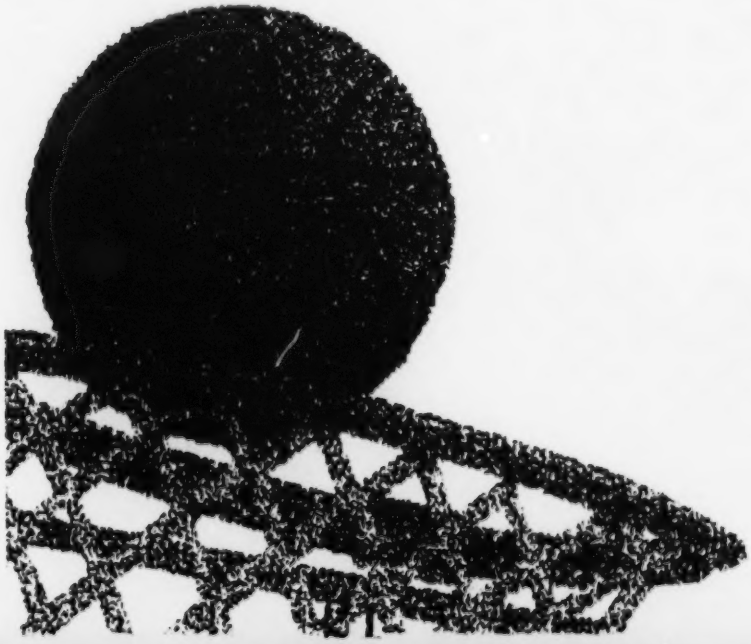
6 to 9

Interests and Abilities

A school-age child seeks out new information, experiences and challenges in play. Extremely social with a clear sense of fairness, a child in this age group is influenced by peers and has a strong gender identity.

Toy Suggestions

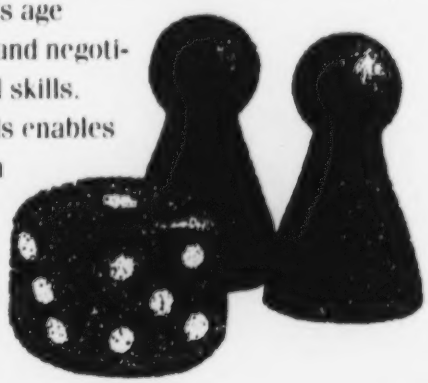
- board games
- sports equipment
- model and craft kits
- science kits
- jigsaw puzzles
- construction toys
- fashion and career dolls
- doll house
- action and hero figures
- puppets, marionettes and theaters
- video games
- bicycle and helmet
- stilts, pogo stick
- magic set
- roller and ice skates plus protective gear
- tape player/radio
- books



9 to 12

Interests and Abilities

A pre-teenager is independent, yet thrives on play with other children. A child this age knows how to cooperate and negotiate using advanced social skills. Mastery of academic skills enables him or her to pursue both intellectual and creative pastimes.



Toy Suggestions

- card and board games
- sports equipment
- table tennis and billiards
- jigsaw puzzles
- model kits
- science kits
- microscope, telescope and magnifying glass
- craft and handwork kits
- art supplies
- advanced construction sets
- puppets, marionettes and theaters
- video games
- bicycle and helmet
- stilts, pogo stick
- magic set
- roller and ice skates plus protective gear
- tape player/radio
- books

This toy buying guide was created by child development specialist Mary Sinker.

TOY MANUFACTURERS OF AMERICA AND AMERICAN TOY INSTITUTE

Thank you for requesting the second edition of THE TMA GUIDE TO TOYS & PLAY. The seeds for this booklet were sown in late 1979 with the publication of a series of pamphlets covering toy selection and play, followed by THE ABCs OF TOYS & PLAY in 1983, LEARNING ABOUT LABELS in 1985 and the first version of THE TMA GUIDE TO TOYS & PLAY in 1990. Although the principles of choosing safe toys and the importance of playing with and supervising children are unchanged, our new guide reflects the most up-to-date information available on toy safety and child development.

Toy Manufacturers of America, Inc. (TMA), founded in 1916 and based in New York City, is the trade association for U.S. producers and importers of toys and holiday decorations. The American Toy Institute, Inc. (ATI) is TMA's educational and charitable affiliate.

Major activities include managing the annual American International Toy Fair, working with government agencies on a large variety of industry issues, engaging in an ongoing safety assurance program, sponsoring and maintaining the Toy Industry Hall of Fame, providing counsel to members, compiling industry statistics, conducting a full communications and public information program, producing a series of educational seminars, supporting the Fashion Institute of Technology's Toy Design Program and operating a credit information exchange.

The Association is recognized by government, the trade, media and consumers as the authoritative voice of the U.S. toy industry.

If you have a problem with a toy, we encourage you to contact the manufacturer or return it to the store where it was purchased.

If you are interested in ordering bulk copies of this booklet, please write to us:

American Toy Institute, Inc.
200 Fifth Avenue, Suite 740
New York, NY 10010

Toy Manufacturers of America (The American Toy Institute) and the American Foundation for the Blind have published a GUIDE TO TOYS FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED. The Guide, which features 70 commercially available toys in ten categories, has a detailed introduction and special information for parents and caregivers.

Copies are free by writing to:

American Toy Institute, Inc.
200 Fifth Avenue, Suite 740
New York, NY 10010

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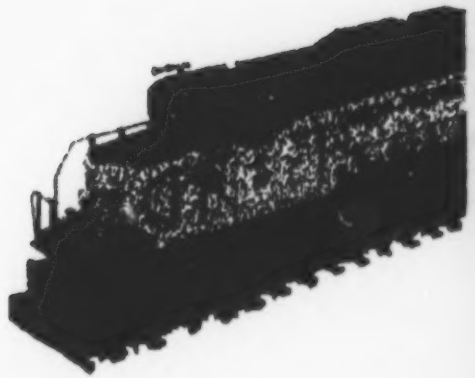

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